

MEETING RECORD

NAME OF GROUP: NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Thursday, January 26, 2006, 8:00 a.m., Room 206, County-City Building, 555 South 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

MEMBERS AND OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Members:	Jim Hewitt, V.J. Nelson, Jeff Searcy and Kim Todd. Karen Kilgarin, Tom Laging and Patrick O'Donnell absent.
Others:	Mark Hunzeker (Pierson Fitchett Law Firm); Glenn Hillhouse (Glenn's Body Shop); Jon Carlson (Near South Neighborhood Assoc.); Lynn Johnson and Jerry Shorney (Parks and Recreation); Bob Ripley (Capitol Administration); Ed Zimmer and Michele Abendroth (Planning Department).

STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Meeting of the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission

Chair Searcy called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m.

Approval of meeting notes of November 10, 2005

Hewitt moved approval of the November 10, 2005 meeting notes, seconded by Nelson. Motion carried 4-0. Hewitt, Nelson, Searcy and Todd voting 'yes'; Kilgarin, Laging and O'Donnell absent.

Recommendation on Change of Zone #05082, 21st and K Streets, R-6 to B-3

Mark Hunzeker stated that Glenn Hillhouse has operated an automobile repair facility at 21st and P Streets for many years. His business will need to relocate as it is in the path of the Antelope Valley project. The City has purchased the property. Hillhouse has acquired the lots at 21st and K Streets from Alltel to relocate his business. They are applying for a change of zone from R-6 to B-3 on this property. The B-3 district provides for a wide range of uses from residential to business. This is a conditional use in the B-3 district. This is a business that has been in downtown for a very long time and would like to stay and re-invest in this area. There are three different plans that show three different uses for this area. They feel the mixed use designation is most sensible for this area. The area surrounding this site is not particularly attractive, and they feel the proposed building will enhance the area. He feels that when the City displaces a business like this, there is some obligation to accommodate its relocation in a manner that is compatible with its surroundings. There is some discussion in the staff report that this is an entryway to downtown. They agree that is true on the L Street side, but they are on the exit side of downtown and on the fringe of the downtown. They feel this use is a good one in downtown, particularly on the edge of downtown.

Hillhouse then provided a drawing of the proposed building. He stated that the building is quite beautiful. One of the biggest problems with auto repair shops is the appearance of overhead doors. He has limited the amount of doors on the K Street side. The incoming and exiting of the vehicles will be to the rear in the alley. They will not be backing out onto K Street at all. The building is a single-story stucco building with sufficient landscaping. He feels it would enhance the area.

Hunzeker noted that the purpose of today's meeting is for the change of zone, and if they are successful with that, they will come back at a later date for comments on the building design.

Nelson asked about the noise concern. Hillhouse commented that because of the way cars are manufactured today and the costs of repair versus replacement, noise issues are not a concern. Hunzeker added that there are stringent standards to uphold in the noise ordinance.

Todd asked if the building uses the entire site. Hunzeker stated that the building takes about half the site, and the other half will be developed in the future for uses consistent with the zoning district.

Zimmer stated that the Commission's responsibility on this is making an advisory comment to the Planning Commission and City Council.

Ripley stated he is always concerned when good businesses are displaced, but he has a concern with this particular location. He also has a concern with the proximity to Lincoln High School. His concern for this proposal is not a rejection of keeping businesses in downtown.

Hunzeker reiterated that this proposed use is a definite improvement of the appearance of this area.

Searcy commended Hillhouse on the aesthetic appearance of the building. He then asked about the process. Zimmer stated that the change of zone will go to Planning Commission and then City Council. If this is approved, the design standards and site layout would come to the Capitol Environs Commission for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Searcy also noted that he would be interested in knowing the plans for the other half of the area.

Ripley cautioned the Commission members to keep in mind that this will set a precedent, and we need to keep a clear focus on what we want ultimately. He feels Planning's recommendation is correct and consistent with past recommendations of the Commission and long-range planning.

Searcy asked about the timeline of the relocation process. Hillhouse stated that his lease with the City is up April 1st. He noted that he has made offers or checked into many other locations, but has been unsuccessful in obtaining another property due to various reasons. So the urgency is past critical.

Todd asked if there is another zoning district between R-6 and B-3 that would accommodate this. Zimmer stated that it would be worth exploring this option. However, this change of zone will go to Planning Commission prior to the next Capitol Environ Commission's next meeting. He suggested that the Commission make some type of recommendation to the Planning Commission.

Hewitt commented that the Commission's responsibility is to evaluate this proposal's impact on the Capitol.

Hewitt moved to recommend the change of zone from R-6 to B-3 for the east half of the property and to explore other more restrictive districts that would allow this use, seconded by Nelson. Motion carried 4-0. Hewitt, Nelson, Searcy and Todd voting 'yes'; Kilgarin, Laging and O'Donnell absent.

LB1235, funding a Nebraska writers memorial on Centennial Mall

Zimmer informed the Commission that LB1235 has been introduced by Senator Beutler in the Legislature this session. This bill is proposing to establish a memorial on Centennial Mall for Nebraska poets and writers in honor of Ted Kooser. The bill stipulates that matching funds would be required to accompany the proposed State funding.

Hewitt moved to recommend to the Legislature that they pass this Bill; seconded by Nelson. Motion carried 4-0. Hewitt, Nelson, Searcy and Todd voting 'yes'; Kilgarin, Laging and O'Donnell absent.

Update on Near South Focus Area (including south mall of Environs)

Jon Carlson updated the members on the Near South Neighborhood focus area plan. They currently have a focus area plan that runs from 13th to 17th and from A to G Streets, which is the northwest corner of the Near South Neighborhood. This plan has been in existence since 1997, and they want to do an update to the focus area plan. They have had two public neighborhood meetings. Prior to the second meeting, they created a new set of draft strategies. They feel it is important to work with and through the Capitol Environs Commission. One of the things that they feel is important is creating a sense of identity in the neighborhood. They want to have strategies that increase home ownership rates. They want to update their focus area plan and then possibly create a redevelopment plan.

Hewitt commented that Hansen Park in Omaha has seen a decline in crime rates and drug activity recently and suggested that they look into the strategies that have been used to accomplish this.

Staff Report

Johnson updated the Commission on the Centennial Mall design study of last summer. He stated that they have incorporated the Laging Plan and the Enersen Plan into a proposal. They will bring the plans to the Commission at a later date after further refinement.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:21 a.m.

***Please note that these minutes will not be formally approved until the next meeting of the Capitol Environs Commission. ***